

NASHVILLE DISTRICT
Guide for Travel Approving Officials
15 July 1997

Travel Approving Officials (AOs) have broad authority to determine when temporary duty travel (TDY) is necessary to accomplish the mission, authorize travel, obligate travel funds, approve trip arrangements, and authorize travel expenses incurred in connection with the mission.

What's Allowable and Not Allowable: This guide is a summary of the DoD *Joint Travel Regulation* (JTR), Volume 2, Appendix O. It does not cover all circumstances. If there is any question or doubt about what is authorized, you should refer to the JTR, volume 2, Appendix O. Your Transportation Officer, Ernest Alley, (615) 736-5356, can provide assistance in the proper interpretation and application of Appendix O of the JTR.

1. Transportation:

a. AOs may *direct* the use of a particular mode of travel (commercial air, bus or train) except for the use of a private or rental vehicle. Only direct a specific mode when it's essential to mission success.

b. The servicing Commercial Travel Office (CTO) will use contract flights and fares in scheduling travel. AOs may authorize other arrangements if-

- (1) Seating space or the scheduled contract flight is not available in time to accomplish the mission, or if use of the contract flight would increase the overall cost of the trip.
- (2) The contract carrier's flight schedule does not operate during normal working hours.
- (3) A fare, that is available to the general public, is less than the contract fare and would result in lower total cost to the government.

c. AOs may authorize premium (but less than first) class travel accommodations for the following reasons:

- (1) Available coach class will not allow timely mission completion.
- (2) A documented medical condition requires use of premium class.
- (3) An overall savings will be realized.

d. The traveler should provide a remark in the Travel Order Create/Update Screen (CEFMS Screen 12.1.1) indicating that he/she is not using a contract fare. The traveler may select a standard remark from the Travel Order Remarks List (CEFMS Screen 12.1.1) "Noncontract carrier

authorized." This remark will alert you to the fact that a non-contract fare is involved in the TDY.

e. Travel Involving Leave or Personal Convenience. The AO may permit a traveler to combine official travel with leave or personal travel. The official travel will be arranged through the servicing CTO. Transportation reimbursement is authorized only for the cost of official round trip travel between duty stations. The traveler may make other travel plans and pay the excess.

f. Use of Privately Owned Vehicle (POV). When the AO authorizes the use of a POV for transportation, a determination must be made if it is for convenience of the government or for the traveler's convenience. If use of the POV is for convenience of the government, reimbursement is at the official mileage rate multiplied by the authorized distance. Travel days should be based on 400 miles/day. If use of the POV is at the traveler's convenience, reimbursement is limited to the "should cost" estimate of the AO approved method of transportation. Different rates of mileage reimbursement are no longer required. When a POV is used, the one official mileage rate applies.

g. Authorized Trips Home During Extended (in excess of three weeks) TDY. AOs may authorize return trips to the permanent duty station or home only when travel funds are available to support the travel expense. AOs must determine that the costs of such periodic travel are outweighed by the benefits or savings. Items to consider in the determination include the total length of the TDY, the distance of return travel, increased efficiency and productivity as well as employee hardship and retention. The travel should be performed outside the traveler's regularly scheduled duty hours or during leave. Reimbursement includes round-trip transportation and 75% M&IE on travel days. NOTE: When the AO does not authorize the trip at government expense, the traveler can still opt to do this. The AO may authorize transportation and en route per diem not to exceed the per diem the traveler would have received if he/she had remained at the TDY location.

h. Allowable Travel Days: The days or time allowed for travel is determined by the mode of travel.

Commercial Air within CONUS & overseas -- one day

Commercial Air between CONUS and overseas -- actual elapsed time

Private vehicle, advantageous to the government -- one day each 400 miles

Private vehicle, not advantageous to government -- one day

2. Lodging:

a. Reimbursement is authorized for the actual cost of lodging, based on the single occupancy rate, up to the maximum for the TDY site or stopover location. If the only lodging available costs more than the published maximum rate, the AO may authorize the higher amount not to exceed 150% of the published maximum rate for lodging plus M&IE (meals and incidental ex-

penses). **The AO should enter remarks in the Travel Order Approving Official Approval Screen (CEFMS screen 12.72 after entering Y in the first column) providing the basis for authorizing actual cost lodging.** Please refer to paragraph 3 of this guide for a more detailed explanation of this item and how to compute authorized expenses.

b. Reimbursement of lodging costs when staying with friends or relatives is not authorized.

c. For TDY at one location for more than 30 days, lodging reservations should be made on a weekly, monthly or other long term basis if possible. When longer term lodging is used, the allowable lodging cost includes rent, charges for furniture rental, utility connections, use and disconnections fees, cleaning fees, and telephone monthly use fees, but not toll charges. See 5.b. below for information on telephone charges.

3. Actual Expense Lodging:

a. Travel Approving Officials may determine when mission requirements warrant authorization of the actual expense lodging cost. This level of reimbursement should be authorized in advance of the TDY trip. Actual expense lodging, up to the limitations described herein, may be authorized when:

(1) lodging at the normal per diem rate is not available or cannot be obtained within a reasonable proximity of the TDY location;

(2) or transportation costs to commute to and from lodging at the TDY duty station consumes most or all of the savings achieved by occupying the less expensive lodging site.

Other examples when actual lodging cost may be appropriate include temporary increases in hotel rates due to special events at the TDY site, emergency situations, or when traveling with VIPs not staying at hotels offering government rates. Your servicing CTO will provide hotel/motel rates for most travel locations.

b. Travel Approving Officials have the authority to approve actual lodging costs up to a maximum of 150% of the published maximum rate for lodging plus meals and incidental expenses (M&IE). Delegation below this level is not authorized. There are no provisions for actual expense above this level within CONUS unless GSA makes such a determination prior to travel. Up to 300% may be authorized, when travel is to a presidential declared disaster area or other location designated by GSA. In these cases, notification of approval to exceed the 150% threshold will be issued through HQUSACE.

c. Computation of the 150% threshold is as follows:

(1) Step 1. Use the entire per diem rate for the TDY point (lodging plus meals and incidental expense) even though the approval will be only for lodging cost. Example: lodging \$124, M&IE \$38, Total \$162. $\$162 \times 1.5 = \243 (round up to the nearest dollar).

(2) Step 2. Subtract the M&IE rate (\$38) from the answer for step 1 (\$243) to obtain the maximum actual expense for lodging. In this example, $\$243 - \$38 = \$205$. \$205 is the maximum amount allowed for lodging based on an actual expense allowance of 150%.

NOTE: When preparing/approving travel orders that involve Actual Expense Lodging Plus (AELP), the traveler must enter AELP in the Method of Reimbursement field of the CEFMS Travel Order Leg Itinerary Screen (CEFMS Screen 12.3) to ensure reimbursement at the actual expense rate.

4. Meals and Incidental Expenses:

- a. On travel days to and from the TDY site, a flat 75% rate of M&IE is authorized.
- b. Full days of TDY, a rate of 100% M&IE is authorized.
- c. Travel days from one TDY location to another, a rate of 100% M&IE is authorized.

5. Other Reimbursable Expenses:

- a. ATM fees for advances on government travel card
- b. Telephone Calls. The AO may consider certain telephone calls to home or family made by the traveler as in the government's best interest. Such calls may be to advise of the traveler's safe arrival, inform or inquire about medical conditions, changes in itinerary or other communication requirements at the permanent duty station or home. AOs must limit this to a dollar amount, normally before the TDY is made.
- c. Rental Cars. The AO may authorize rental cars when their use is the most cost-effective or efficient way to complete the mission. The compact car size should be authorized unless the number of passengers or the mission requires a larger vehicle.
- d. Actual transportation costs from the point official travel begins to the transportation terminal and from the transportation terminal to the point official travel ends is authorized. This also includes parking at terminals. Official travel begins when the traveler leaves his/her domicile, official duty station, or other authorized point of departure and ends when he/she returns to the domicile, official duty station, or other authorized point of departure at the conclusion of the TDY assignment. For example, if the traveler reports to work, TDY begins when the traveler leaves the office to begin the TDY assignment. However, if traveler departs from his/her domicile and stops at the place of work only to pick up a government vehicle, TDY begins when the traveler leaves his/her domicile. In the latter case, the work place is considered a terminal since no work was actually performed there. Reimbursement may not exceed the cost of taxi fare to and from the terminal.
- e. Actual transportation cost in and around TDY location is authorized.

f. Conference registration fees are authorized. When meals are provided as part of the conference registration fee, the traveler must indicate this on the expense voucher (specific date and meal provided).

g. Other necessary and prudent travel-related expenses incurred to complete mission requirements. Examples of such expenses might include cost of copying materials while staying at a TDY site, last minute rental of audio-visual equipment needed for a presentation, or purchase of necessary work supplies to complete a project while traveling.